

(AND MRS AKIYAMA)

Project I.D. No. 1576

NAME: AKIYAMA Kiyomi DATE OF BIRTH: 1888 PLACE OF BIRTH: NAGANO  
Age: 88 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: 8th GRADE

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1906 Age: 18 M.S. M (1914) Port of entry: VICTORIA, BC  
Occupation/s: 1. SAMILL WORKER 2. HOUSEBOY, FARMWORK 3. GOLD FISH HATCHERY  
Place of residence: 1. SEATTLE 2. LOS ANGELES 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Religious affiliation: CHRISTIAN (1913)  
Community organizations/activities: \_\_\_\_\_

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of relocation center: DOSTON  
Dispensation of property: BUSINESS MGR WAREHOUSE Names of bank/s: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jobs held in camp: 1. RAISED CARP FOR FOOD 2. MRS A. DISHWASHER  
Jobs held outside of camp: \_\_\_\_\_  
Left camp to go to: MINNESOTA 1945 (1 MONTH)

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: 1945  
Address/es: 1. SANTA ANA 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Religious affiliation: CHRISTIAN  
Activities: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interviewer: TAKARABE Date: 2/76 Place: ORANGE CO.



Q: What is your name?

A: My name is Kiyomi Akiyama.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Nagano Prefecture.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in March, 1888.

Q: How old are you now?

A: I am 88 years old.

Q: What was your father's occupation?

A: He was a farmer.

Q: Did he own a big farm?

A: He had an average size farmland, and lived on it.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I had 7 of them.

Q: Where did you rank among your brothers and sisters?

A: I was the 6th child.

Q: What kind of a person was your father?

A: Frankly speaking, my father did not like to work too much. He worked because he had to.



Q: What kind of a person was your mother?

A: She was the only daughter of the Akiyama family, and my father was adopted into her family. She was a very serious person, and I respected her very much.

Q: Did you learn things from your mother or from your father?

A: Looking back, I think I was influenced more by my mother than father.

Q: Do you remember anything that your mother taught you?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: What kind of thing do you remember?

A: What I remember most is that she told me that I should be the first to start working after taking a break and set an example to hired hands as I am the son of a farmer. She told me that even when I went to help other farms I should take a lead in going back to work after a break. My parents did not have much education but I remember that much.

Q: Do you have childhood memories, such as happy memories and sad memories?

A: I do not have any especially sad memories as we were not needy, and I had many friends. On the other hand, I did not have any especially happy memories.

Q: What kind of games did you play?

A: As we were a farming family we were busy and did not have time to play. The only time I played was at the athletic meet at school.



Q: When you played, what kind of games did you play?

A: We had long winter. From November to February it was cold and we could not work outside too much, so young people gathered and talked and sang. I think that was the most fun I had. During the summer the farmers had to work from morning till night so I did not have much time to play.

Q: Does it snow much in Nagano Prefecture?

A: It does not snow as much as in Niigata Prefecture but it was very cold because it was around 2,000 to 2,000 feet above sea level.

Q: How much schooling did you have?

A: I went as far as the 8th grade.

Q: Did you like school?

A: I did not like it too much.

Q: Do you remember about your teachers?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Were there any interesting teachers?

A: Japanese teachers were fearful rather than interesting.

Q: Did you study moral science?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Are you glad you studied moral science?

A: Looking back, I think it was good.



Q: Were you unimpressed then?

A: No, I thought it was the code of life.

Q: Do you remember being scolded by your prents?

A: I don't remember being scolded severely. I was only admonished once in a while.

Q: Were you spoilt as you were the 6th child?

A: No, I wasn't. There were 5 boys and two girls. As my brother was born as the 4th child he was taken good care of, but I was ignored.

Q: What did you do after you graduate~~d~~ from school?

A: Schools were far from our house and I could not afford to go to a high school. It happened to be during the Russo-Japanese War and my brother had gone to war, so I had to work as a foreman. I had just graduated from grammar school, but as my brother had gone to war and my father was too old and could not work well, I had to work as a boss until my brother came home. That is why I could not get education as I wanted.

Q: Do you remember anything else that happened in your village?

A: It was a very peaceful village and nothing special happened.

Q: Did you grandparents live with you?

A: My grandfather died when I was about 5 years old, so I don't remember him well.



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Q: Did you learn lessons about life from your parents?

A: I think I was taught about life by my mother. I am deeply impressed with her teaching to be honest.

Q: Were there books in your house?

A: There were hardly any books in my house.

Q: Was the story of Ninomiya Sontoku popular in those days?

A: I learned about him at school.

Q: What was the religion of your family?

A: It was Buddhism.

Q: What sect was it?

A: It was Zen Sect.

Q: Was your village a big village?

A: It was an average size village.

Q: Were there festivals in the village?

A: Yes, there were.

Q: What kind of festivals were there?

A: There was a tutelary deity of the village. Once a year the villagers visited the shrine and the priest gave prayers. Relatives from other villages visited the families of the village<sub>rs</sub> and had feasts.



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Q: Was there a harvest festival?

A: No, there wasn't.

Q: Was that festival<sup>held</sup> only once a year?

A: Yes, it was. There was Bon. It was not a festival but people stopped working and held services for the dead.

Q: What about Tanabata (the Festival of the Weaver Star)?

A: Yes, we wrote poems on narrow sheets of paper. Most festivals in the country came from Buddhism. Most funerals in the country were held in Buddhist style, and hardly any in Shinto style.

Q: How about the weddings? Were they in Shinto style?

A: No, they were neither Buddhist or Shinto style. They were held at homes.

Q: Don't Shinto priest or Buddhist monks officiate the weddings?

A: No, they don't come. They might have come in Tokyo, but not to farming families in the country.

Q: Why don't the Buddhist priests come to the weddings?

A: They do not go to any other ceremonies except the funerals. Only in America the Buddhist priests go to the weddings.

Q: What kind of subjects did you like at school?

A: I liked music. I liked geography a little.



Q: Did you long <sup>to go to</sup> big cities like Tokyo or Osaka then?

A: When I was in grade school I did not have such ideas, but around the time my brother came back from the service I read about foreign countries in magazines and wanted to go<sup>to</sup> such places.

Q: At that time what kind of a country did you think America was?

A: I didn't know too much about America then. I heard that it was a good place but I didnot have intention of going abroad.

Q: Were there any people who went to America from your village?

A: There were one or two, but I did not know them.

Q: Do you remember about the Sino-Japanese War?

A: Just vaguely. I remember people saying we won the war.

Q: Did you know of anybody who were killed in the War?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Were you in America when the World War I started?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: How did it happened that you came to America?

A: My sister's husband was an intellectual. He had knowledge of America and told me that America is a good place to live and earn money so he encouraged me to go. As my family was not needy but could not afford to send me to America I was not too anxious to come. But when my brother came back from service he told me that as I was 19 years old I had to go into service sooner or later, so if I want to go to America I should go before that time comes. As I was the



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second son, if the property was divided between my brother and I my brother's share will be reduced, so I thought I should go to America. My second sister's husband encouraged me by saying that he would collect money from other brothers and sisters for my passage, so I decided to come to America. Nagano Prefecture is in the country and people were not financially badly off so we lived in comfort, and did not think about going abroad.

One of my grammar school friends attended a private school of Chinese literature kept by a Christian and a scholar of Chinese literature Kenji Iguchi who was influenced by Kanzo Uchimura. Many young men attended the school during the winter when there was no work and learned about foreign countries and Christianity. Around 1906 many young men who went to that school came to America.

Q: Did you get in contact with Christianity for the first time then?

A: I did not attend that school, but I heard about Mr. Iguchi from my friend.

Q: Was it agreed that you come to America then?

A: My brother collected 50 yen from each brother and sister and gave me 300 yen for my passage to come to America.

Q: Did you need 300 yen then?

A: Yes, the passage was 200 yen and show money was 50 yen.

Q: Did you know then what kind of a country America was?

A: I heard that it was a nice place.



Q: What year did you leave Japan?

A: It was December of 1906.

Q: Where did the ship sail from?

A: From Yokohama.

Q: How did you feel when you left Japan?

A: I did not have any special feeling. I just wanted to go to America as soon as possible.

Q: Did you think about going back to Japan then?

A: No, I didn't. But I thought I would go back to Japan when I had enough money saved.

Q: About how much was enough money?

A: I thought 10,000 yen would be enough.

Q: How was it on board the ship?

A: The passengers were mostly young men so I had a good time.

Q: What did you do on board the ship?

A: We talked, sang and some people recited Shigin.

Q: Was it at a party?

A: No, we did not have such thing. I missed the ship I was supposed to have caught because they were strict about trachoma in those days.



I was supposed to be on the ship that left Yokohama on the 23rd. I arrived in Tokyo on the 23rd and did some shopping till late that night to get ready for the trip. When I went to have a physical examination the next morning my eyes were red so I failed the physical examination.

Q: Did you wait for the next ship at Tokyo?

A: I waited at Yokohama. When I came back to the hotel I heard that the head of the Rokkaku Hospital would guarantee us if we go to America via Canada, so I stayed at the Rokkaku Hospital for 2 weeks with 3 other men who failed the eye examination.

The ship to Seattle was Nippon Yusen Line, but the one that went to Victoria, Canada was a British cargo ship, so I got on board that ship.

Q: Was the food on the ship Western style food?

A: I don't remember. I think the cook was a Chinese.

Q: About how many Japanese were on board the ship?

A: About 30 Japanese. They were almost all around my age, and there were 2 or 3 people from Nagano Prefecture.

Q: Did you arrive at Victoria?

A: Yes, I did. After we landed there we were told to stay there for a week. After that they gave each of us a bottle of medicine and we came to America via Vancouver without any trouble. On the train an immigration officer gave us passports and <sup>we</sup> entered America.



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Q: How did you feel when you arrived at Victoria?

A: I was relieved that I arrived there safely.

Q: How was your English?

A: I didn't even know the alphabet.

Q: How did you know where to go when you arrived at Victoria?

A: There were Japanese hotels there and I had friends so we helped each other. I had the hardest time as I could not speak English.

Q: Did you go from Victoria to Vancouver?

A: We went to Vancouver by a ship. From Vancouver we came to America by a train.

Q: Did a Japanese put you on a train?

A: I bought a train ticket. I don't remember what I did, but I came to America without getting lost.

Q: What did you do after you arrived at Seattle?

A: After I got off the train I went to a Japanese hotel. There were many Japanese there, so they helped me.

Q: When you saw the city how did you feel?

A: I was not particularly impressed.

Q: Didn't you think it was different?

A: I thought<sup>only</sup> the scenery was pretty with big trees and wide open space.



Q: Did you get off at Seattle?

A: I stayed there for about 6 months.

Q: What did you do during that time?

A: I came here to work and make money and pay back the passage I borrowed so I went looking for a job. People told me there were jobs here and there, but my predecessor was here, I decided to go there.

Q: What kind of work did you do in Seattle?

A: I worked at a sawmill.

Q: Where was the sawmill?

A: They were at Redmond, Keystone and and                     ?.

I worked there for about 3 months.

Q: What kind of work did you do at the sawmill?

A: We put away sawdust.

Q: Did many Japanese work there?

A: Yes, most workers were Japanese.

Q: Were you 18 years old then?

A: I was 18 years and about 10 months, not quite 19 yet.

Q: Weren't you lonesome?

A: I never got homesick. I just thought about my friends in Japan, so I wrote letters.



Q: What did you write about?

A: I wrote about America and what we did in Japan. They wrote back to me. I looked forward to the letters from Japan most.

Q: Did anything special happen during the six months while you stayed in SEattle?

A: Nothing special happened.

Q: About how much did you earn in those days?

A: The wages at the sawmill was 15¢ an hour, so I made \$1.50 working 10 hours a day.

Q: About how much did it cost to live one day in those days?

A: Food was about \$6.50 to \$10.00 a month.

Q: How much for a place to sleep?

A: It was free. We just paid for the food.

Q: Did you have about \$20 left every month?

A: Yes, easily.

Q: It didn't take you too long to earn \$50, didn't it?

A: No, it didn't.

Q: Did you pay your debts back from Seattle?

A: Yes, right away.

Q: Was the work at the sawmill pretty rough job?

A: No, it wasn't.



Q: Didn't anybody get injured?

A: Yes, some people cut their hands with saw, but that didn't happen too often.

Q: Were most Japanese men single?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: Were you young among them?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Were most men in 30s and 40s?

A: Yes, they were. There were many men who came from Hawaii. They said they were going back to Japan after they saved some money. They were old and were used to work, so they taught me work kindly.

Q: Were there any single Issei who gambled?

A: There was a group of people who gambled, but I have never been to such a place so I don't know about it. I just heard about it.

Q: Weren't there some people who lost what they earned?

A: Yes, they gambled and lost what they earned. I think there were many people like that. There were no other recreation so they gambled.

Q: Did they gamble among themselves or they go out in town to gamble?

A: Some people went out to town, but a group of people in the camp gathered at night time and gambled with the money they earned. Those people were quite old. I never went to such a place.



Q: Were there any professional gamblers who took money people earned?

A: I heard there were such people, but as I stayed away from them I don't know about such thing.

Q: Didn't prostitutes come to camps as most men were single?

A: No, I didn't hear such thing.

Q: Where did you go from Seattle?

A: I came here via San Francisco.

Q: Did you come here straight?

A: Yes, I did. I came here in August of 1907.

Q: How was the train ride?

A: I went to San Francisco from Seattle by a ship and from San Francisco I came to Los Angeles by a train.

Q: Did you know how to <sup>transfer</sup> from the ship to the train?

A: I was given the direction so I could guess what to do. I did not feel lost.

Q: Do you have any <sup>interesting</sup> recollection?

A: I don't have any special recollection of the voyage or the train ride.

Q: Did anything interesting happen while you were in Seattle, or while you were working at the sawmill?

A: In those days I didn't think anything but to save money and pay back the debt.



Q: What did you do for recreation in those days? Did you just work?

A: I read books and magazines. I <sup>r</sup>learned alphabets from my senior.

Q: Did you go and see movies?

A: No, never. I did not go to a movie while I was in Seattle. After I came here I did not go to a movie as I lived in the country.

Q: You didn't have any contact with the white families, didn't you?

A: After I came here I had contact with them.

Q: Where did you come first?

A: I came to Smelza. It is a celery-growing district so many Japanese were here. I knew a man who was working here, so I came here looking for him.

Q: What did you do first when you went there?

A: I worked in the celery field.

Q: Did you work as a living-in worker?

A: There were about 10 camps with 20 to 30 laborers, and the boss gets jobs for the laborers.

Q: There were not too many Japanese women in those days, weren't there?

A: I saw only two Japanese women.

Q: About how much was your wages in those days?

A: It was 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ an hour and \$1.25 a day working 10 hours. The room and board was from \$6.50 to \$7.50 a month. All you have to buy was your blanket and clothes. There were no beds. We slept on



a board on the floow with straws on it.

Q: Didn't your back hurt?

A: I was used to sleeping on straw mats in Japan.

Q: What kind of recollections do you have about those days?

A: After I got used to the life in America I came to like the Americans.

Q: In what way did you like them?

A: Whereever I went they were kind to me. I didn't know if the landlord was kind to me because he was a Christian but he was very kind to me when he spoke to me who didn't understand English. I came to respect him and worked hard and he trusted me, so we had a very pleasant relationship. Financially I was not well off, but spiritually I lived in peace.

Q: Did you intend to settle down here permanently then?

A: I did not have American citizenship so I did not have intention to live here permanently.

Q: How long did you stay in that camp?

A: I stayed there for about 2 years. After that I became independent and lived in a white family and cooked for myself.

Q: What did you do there?

A: I farmed.

Q: Were the white people around here kind to you?

A: Yes, they were very kind. On Sundays the whole family went to church on a buggy.



Q: Have you ever been persecuted because of racial prejudice in those days?

A: No, never.

Q: Japanese people around here were lucky, weren't they?

A: Yes, I think we were very lucky.

T: Japanese in San Francisco were persecuted in those days.

A: I heard about it. They might have had ill feelings during the war but we have never been persecuted.

Q: Have you even been called "Jap"?

A: No, never.

Q: Was celery the main product here around 1910?

A: It changed from celery to sugar beets and lima beans. There were most numbers of Japanese when we produced celery. After celery production went down they moved to other districts. Only a few people like me stayed behind.'

Q: How was the life style of single Isseis in those days?

A: Many Isseis had intention of going back to Japan after they saved certain amount of money. Young men of my age did not have such intention, so many young men did not think about saving money.

Q: Were the Isseis around here quite serious people?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: Were there any Isseis who loafed around doing nothing?

A: No, there were no such people around here.



Q: Around Sacramento there were Chinese gambling houses and brothels and the atmosphere was quite rough. There was no such thing around here, weren't there?

A: No, there were no such things.

Q: There were many wives who suffered hardships because their husbands lost all their earnings by gambling. Were there any such people around here?

A: No, there was no such case around here. There was Yamato Club in Los Angeles, but Japanese farmers around here were serious people and they did not go to such place.

Q: It was quite far, too, wasn't it?

A: Yes, we had to take a trolley to Los Angeles. People who went to such a place like Yamato Club were those who loafed around Los Angeles, <sup>but</sup> and the farmers in the country were serious people so they did not go to such a place.

Q: What do you remember about the days you stayed at a white family and cooked for yourself?

A: The white people trusted me so I worked hard.

Q: Did anything interesting happen in those days?

A: No, nothing especially interesting happened that I should mention.

Q: Didn't you go to movies?

A: No, I didn't.



Q: What did you do when you had time to spare?

A: I didn't have any spare time.

Q: What did you do on Sundays?

A: I went to church on Sundays.

Q: When did you attend a church for the first time?

A: I went to a church in Seattle. I don't know what church it was but there was no Japanese there. After I moved into the country there was no church so I did not have an opportunity to attend a church. After I came here I was introduced to Rev. Terasawa and Mr. Junzo Nakamura, and I started going to church. Most <sup>church</sup> goers were young men. Rev. Terazawa started a church in a barn near where I lived in 1904. When I went there in 1907 there were about 50 members, mostly students. They were students from around Tokyo and from around Los Angeles. As they did not have any other place to go they gathered at the church and had a good time. On Saturday nights we had social gatherings and the church was very active.

Q: When were you baptized?

A: In 1913.

Q: Did you enjoy the church life?

A: Sometimes I enjoyed it and sometimes I didn't.

Q: In what way you didn't <sup>you</sup> enjoy it?

A: We were troubled about how to maintain the church.



Q: When did it become hard to maintain the church?

A: It was hard all the time. When I think about the pastors in those days I feel sorry for them. Their salary was only about \$30 to \$35.

Q: Who was the first pastor?

A: He was Rev. Terasawa. He was the founder of our church.

Q: Was Zunzo Nakamura the next pastor?

A: He was not a pastor then. He was a relation of Rev. Terasawa, and he stayed with him. After he went back to Japan he became a pastor. After he went back to Japan Rev. Inazawa came to the church.

Q: What kind of a person was Rev. Nakamura?

A: He was a very serious man, and I considered him like my father.

Q: When did you take a wife?

A: In 1914.

Q: How did you happen to take a wife?

A: My farming partner, Mr. Furuta was baptized by Rev. Terasawa. He went back to Japan to take a wife and came back here. As he was my partner he asked me if I would marry his sister<sup>in-law,</sup> so I did. She was a picture bride.

Q: What did you think when you saw her picture?

A: I thought she was pretty.



Q: Then you decided to marry right away?

A: Yes, I did.

Mrs. A: My father was worried about my sister being in America, so he told my sister to summon me to America if there is a suitable husband. If two sisters were together we would not be lonely and our parents would feel relieved. I think that is why my sister was looking for a husband for me, and my husband was picked.

Q: How did you feel when you saw his picture?

A: I didn't have any special impression?

Q: Did you have a feeling that he was a good man?

A: I thought it was decided, so I didn't think he was a good man or a bad man. In those days we just accepted what our parents decided.

Q: What year did Mrs. Akiyama come here?

A: In 1914.

Q: Where did she arrive at?

A: San Francisco.

Q: Did you go and meet her there?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Did you correspond with each other?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: What sort of thing did you write to your wife?

A: I don't remember.



Q: Do you remember, Mrs. Akiyama?

A: I remember <sup>him</sup> telling me that he failed in business and did not have money.

Q: What kind of business was that?

A: It was celery business.

Q: Why did you fail?

A: I could not sell what I produced.

Q: Did you lose a lot of money?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: About how much did you lose?

A: I got into about \$10,000 debt.

Q: Were you farming on your own then?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Were you sharecropping?

A: I was on my own.

Q: Did you buy land?

A: No, I leased the land. My landlord became old and wanted to retire so he asked me to take over his farm. Mr. Furuta and I became partners and took over the farm but the business was not good and we lost money.



Q: What did you do after you failed?

A: The landlord told us to continue farming and he would pay for the food. The white man next door was a kind Christian. He told us that he would share some seeds with us and would teach us how to farm if we would listen to him, so we decided to continue farming.

Q: Did you grow the same thing?

A: We grew the same thing and also something different. We leased 60 acres with 8 horses and farm implements but we did not pay a penny. We didn't have any money but they trusted us. The neighbor felt sorry for us and told us that he would teach us how to farm if we listened to him. That year the World War I broke out and the potatoe and corn which the neighbor taught us how to grow had good crops, so we could pay off almost all the debts. I have been farming since then but I have not made much money.

Q: Did you go to San Francisco to meet your bride?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Did you go to the ship to meet her?

A: She was taken to the Immigration Office on the Angel Island, so I went there by a boat.

Q: Did you meet her on the Angel Island?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Could you recognize her right away?

A: Yes, as I have seen her picture.



Q: How did you feel when you saw your wife for the first time?

A: I was relieved.

Q: How did you feel when you saw your husband, Mrs. Akiyama?

*Mrs. A*  
A: I heard that he was poor so I did not have a high expectation.  
and was not disappointed.

Q: Were there picture brides who were not serious?

A: That is what I heard.

Q: Do you know of any such case? ..

A: I just heard about such a story.

Q: What kind of story did you hear?

A: A man who worked at an American family had a picture taken in front of the house and sent it to Japan. The bride came here thinking he was living in a big house. A woman who was baptized with me was an intelligent woman graduated from a highschool and came here with a big hope. She worked at a store as a live-in and was very disappointed. Her husband died and she married Rev. Yokoi.

Q: Did you live with your sister's family?

A: Yes, we did as they had a big house.

Q: How long did you farm there?

A: We were there for about 4 years.



Q: What did you do after that?

A: Then the landlord's son joined as a partner. We could not live in the labdlord's house so we lived in our house as we had a house.  
Mrs. A. Before he married me he bought the land adjacent to the church from Rev. Terasawa, so after we married and came to Wintersburg we built a house there. Our 6 children grew up in that house.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: We had 3 children, but one died so we have 2 children,

Q: What did you do after 4 years?

A: I stayed behind, but Mr. Furuta went back to his home. I used to raise goldfish in a pond as a hobby. One day I saw something like mosquitoes in the pond, and found out that they were eggs of goldfish. Then I got interested and wanted to try raising foldfish, as farming was getting bad.

Q: Around what year did you start raising goldfish?

A: I started my hobby of goldfish around 1918.

Q: Were you still farming then?

A: Yes, I was still farming but as a hobby I made a pond in the backyard and had some goldfish in it.

Q: When did you start raising goldfish as a business?

A: I think it was around 1923. In 1923 the Land Act that prohibits Japanese from leasing the land was enacted.



Q: Were your children all born then?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: Did you have enough money to start the goldfish business?

A: No, he worked at a nursery, and I took care of the pond while he was working. After he came home he took care of the goldfish.

Q: Did you open a store?

A: No, we just had a pond where we bred the fish. When the fish hatched he went around stores in Los Angeles taking orders and delivered them.

Q: Did you do that after your work?

A: I did not have too much business and could not produce too much, so I did not go to Los Angeles everyday.

Q: Did you do that as your side business?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Were you selling goldfish then?

A: When we had many goldfish we sold them. When a big store buy all the goldfish we had to start all over again.

Q: About how many goldfish did you start with?

A: I think they were between 1,000 and 2,000. Small ones were from 2 to 3¢ to 5 to 10¢ for big ones. The income was not much so I worked at a nursery when I did not have work.



Q: Did you give up farming and worked at a nursery and started breeding goldfish in 1918?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: When did you start breeding goldfish on full scale?

A: I think it was in 1923.

Q: Did you quit working at the nursery then?

A: Yes, I did. I think it was in 1923 that a law that prohibits Japanese buying and from leasing the land was enacted. But there was no restriction in business, so I decided to start a goldfish business.

Q: Did you buy land then?

A: No, we could not buy land, but we could lease land because it was for business and not for farming. That is why we leased 40 acres and started the business in full scale since 1927.

Q: What kind of difficulties did you have when you started breeding goldfish?

A: I did not have any special difficulties. As I was young I did it in a haphazard way.

Q: When the goldfish became big did you go around taking orders?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Was it a wholesale?

A: Yes, it was.



Q: Did you think out a means to prevent goldfish from dying?

A: A man named Innes saw photographs of goldfish taken by a Japanese named Hoshiyama and wrote a book on goldfish. I read that book with the help of a dictionary and studied it. I thought just reading was not enough so I put it into experience.

Q: Do you have to watch the temperature of the water?

A: It is warm here so I did not have to worry about it.

Q: Were there diseases of goldfish?

A: Yes, there were. When fish are tired the fungus grew on them.

We used underground water, so there was no harm to the fish.

Q: How do the goldfish get tired?

A: If there were too many fish in a small space or if they are malnourished they can get sick. Then we cannot sell them.

Q: Have you had many fish die on you?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: About how many fish die on you?

A: When they die the fish on the whole pond die.

Q: About how many fish are there in a pond?

A: There are from 10,000 to 15,000 fish in a pond.



Q: Did your business go smoothly after you started it on full scale?

A: Yes, it went smoothly because they was hardly anybody with the same line of business. There was one <sup>big business</sup> in the East but it did not have good goldfish like Japanese goldfish. They had carps.

Q: Did you specialize in Japanese goldfish?

A: I had both, but mostly Japanese goldfish.

There were so much orders that we could not catch up with them so we got some from Japan.

Q: About how many fish did you have then?

A: Hundreds of thousands of them. I never counted them.

Q: How was the business during the Depression?

A: We did not feel it at all.

Q: Didn't the price go down?

A: I think it went down a little but it did not affect us financially, so we did not know the Depression.

Q: The foundation of your business was built by then, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Did you own the 40 acres all that while?

A: No, we leased it. as we could not buy land.

Q: When did you buy land?

A: After the war.



Q: About how many acres did you buy?

A: We bought 65 acres.

Q: Didn't anything bad happen until the war broke out?

A: I was never persecuted or discriminated by the white people before the war.

Q: Did the business go on smoothly?

A: Yes, it did.

Q: Weren't there anybody in the same line of business even among the white people?

A: No, there wasn't any white people in the same line of business.

Q: You almost monopolized the business, didn't you?

A: Yes, almost.

Q: How many helpers did you employ?

A: I had around 25 employees.

Q: Did they take care of goldfish?

A: Some took care of goldfish and some raised water plants.

Q: How many ponds did you have?

A: I think we had about 200 ponds.

Q: How big is a pond?

A: Large ones are about 200 feet by 200 feet, and small ones were about 50 feet by 100 feet. The smallest ones were 10 by 10 or 10 by 20.



Q: Was the 40 acres of land used mostly for ponds?

A: Not all, but most of it was used for ponds.

Q: About how much sale did you have around 1930?

A: I had the bookkeeper and the manager take care of books, so I only got the report and I don't know the details. I don't think I was cheated.

Q: Didn't you have around a million dollar in sale?

A: I think I had that much, but there was much expenditures too.

Q: About how many white employees did you have?

A: I had 4 or 5 of them. They were the manager, the bookkeeper and the salesmen. Rest of them were Japanese and Mexicans. Mexicans are the easiest employees. We cannot trust them but they do whatever we tell them to do.

Q: Did the Americans work hard?

A: Yes, they did. I like young people so I employed young people.

Q: About how old was the manager?

A: He had graduated from college 2 or 3 years before he came to work.

Q: What did you do?

A: I bred the goldfish and inspected the ponds.

Q: You didn't have to do much work then, didn't you?

A: I still had to supervise.



Q: Didn't some people make profit during the war as price was high?

A: Yes, some white people made a lot of money.

Q: Looking back, when was the hardest time for you?

A: I think it was 1932, but I was in good health then.

Q: Was that the year you moved here?

A: I moved here that year so I drew money from the bank and bought the land. Then the Depression came and I had no income so I had to bring up the children with the money I had left in the bank.

Q: How many children did you have then?

A: I had four children then.'

Q: How many boys and how many girls do you have?

A: We have 3 sons and 5 daughters.

Q: As an Issei what do you want to teach Sanseis?

A: I want them to become proud Japanese Americans who would not be looked down upon by other races.

Q: Sanseis are now very interested in Japanese culture and studying it.  
Do you approve of it?

A: I think it is a very good thing. As they have Japanese blood in them I wish they would learn as much as they could about Japan.  
I am very pleased that they are helping Isseis through Kimochi-Kai and other organizations.



Q: Did it take time to train the manager?

A: He had taken the business course at the college. As I could not speak English I had to trust him by watching him work. I could not advise him, but if he asked questions I could give my opinion. After he graduated from college he came to our place and putting goldfish in a garbage can delivered them to customers on a truck. He did that for a few years, so we made him a manager. He was a very good manager.

Q: How long did he work for you?

A: He stayed with us until the war broke out. Before we left for the evacuation center we entrusted the business with him. After the war broke out we changed the ownership of the business to our son's name as he had the citizenship. We gave the power of attorney to the manager and left here.

Q: Did he take good care of the business?

A: Not too well, but I should be thankful that we did not lose the business. This white manager was persecuted for helping the Japanese, and was told to quit the business, so he made an excuse that he bought the business.

Q: What did he do after the war ended?

A: When we could come home from camp I wrote to him, but he did not want us to come back right away. In the meantime the business did not go well so he left. I am still grateful to him for helping my business.



Q: How did you feel when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: I was very surprised. I thought the end had come. Soon the F.B.I. came. That day I was going to take my daughter to Los Angeles. When she turned on a radio around noon she heard that Pearl Harbor was attacked. When we arrived in Los Angeles the city was in turmoil. When we came back policemen were standing here and there. The F.B.I. came and arrested people like teachers of the Japanese language school. I was not affiliated with the Japanese Association or the language school, and my 5 American employees spoke for me so I was not taken away. The following day 3 F.B.I. agents came and searched my house because they thought some people were contacting the Japanese Army with shortwave radios. They searched our house from corner to corner but did not find anything so they left.

Q: Did you think you would be arrested to?

A: I thought I might be arrested, so I was prepared to go, but they didn't come. I remember that before the war a sinister looking man came to our place and talked with our manager about Hawaii. He <sup>had</sup> come to take orders for tropical fish. Another man came at night and asked the way to Westminster. Nobody like that came after the war. I never felt I was looked down upon or discriminated. They were always sociable when I met them. Some white people took me to the station when I left for camp.

Q: What did you do during the standstill order?

A: A white man who was a manager at my place was in charge of permit at Santa Ana, so when I went and talked to him he gave me a permit.



Q: What did you do about your business before you evacuated?

A: I left all the business here with the manager in charge,

Q: What did he do with the money from the sale of goldfish?

A: The manager deposited it in the bank, and kept the record.

Q: Were the goldfish still there when you came back from camp?

A: There were some left.

Q: Didn't he breed any new goldfish?

A: I think he did as much as he could.

Q: He couldn't operate the business like you did, couldn't he?

A: No, he couldn't because the helpers scattered away. The agreement was to keep what we had, but he couldn't do that.

Q: What did you do with your belongings?

A: We put them in a warehouse, but something like books and photographs were damaged by rats.

Q: Was anything stolen?

A: We were busy after we came back so we did not check to see if anything was stolen.

Q: What did you think the night before you left for evacuation center?

A: I wondered if I could come back here or not as I was not a citizen.

Q: Did you think everything would be confiscated?

A: I put everything in my child's name as I was afraid they might have been confiscated.



Q: Which camp did you go to?

A: We went to Poston.

Q: How did you feel when you entered Poston?

A: I felt relieved because I heard some Japanese were shot at or thrown rocks at. Not all the Americans are good, but there are some bad ones so I was worried.

Q: How were the barracks?

A: I used to live in such a place before. I thought we should be contented with it as it would not be too long. It was better than the labor camp I lived in long time ago because it had beds. Young people did not have such experience so it was hard for them.

Q: Did you have troubles in the camp?

A: There was a big trouble once and I was worried what would become of us, but it was settled quite peacefully.

Q: What kind of trouble was it?

A: It happened while the head of the camp was away. Some people complained about the way somebody talked and started a riot. Some people who took side with Japan said Japan was winning the war as the shortwave radio reported that Japan was winning the war, but reading English newspaper I did not think Japan was winning the war.

Q: Did you think Japan would lose the war?

A: I did not want Japan to lose the war, but I did not think it would win.



Q: What did you think about Nisei going into military service?

A: I did not think it was wrong as they are American citizens and they have the rights. I think they ought to go into service.

Q: Did anybody speak ill of you because your son went into service?

A: Nobody said anything bad to my face, but some people did behind my back.

Q: What was your opinion on loyalty?

A: I think I signed to be loyal to America. I did not like the way Japan sneak attacked Pearl Harbor.

Q: Weren't you accused to be loyal to America?

A: No, by that time people knew. They might have said something bad behind our backs but they did not accuse us.

Q: Was the radical group sent to Tule Lake, or was it later?

A: I don't remember. I think the loyalty question came up after the riot.

Q: Did you stay in the camp till the end?

A: No, we left the camp in May of 1945. We stayed in the camp for 3 full years. We went there on May 15, 1942 and left there on May 15, 1945.

Q: Did you come back here straight?

A: No, our daughters were in Minesota, so we went there and stayed there for about a month. Then we went to Los Angeles. The manager wanted us to come back here by August. When we came back here he was gone.



Q: Was the manager gone when you came back here?

A: Yes. He didn't want us to come back while he was here. because he had told the neighbors that he had bought the business.

Not too many Japanese had homes to come back to. Many people did not have jobs when they came back so some people came here and worked. After the war ended the Niseis became successful. Since then Japanese prospered. Until then Japanese were all poor. Many people were helped by being put in camps as they had many children to feed. Before the war the wages were low and farming was not good so people lived miserable lives. Only a few people were well off. That is why it was hard to support the church. I felt sorry for the pastors.

Q: What did you do in the camp?

A: I raised carps for food.

Q: Where did the carps come from?

A: We caught them there and put them in a pond we made.

Q: Were those carps edible?

A: Yes, they were good to eat, but not enough for the kitchen. By the time carps grew big we had plenty of food in the kitchen.

Q: Could you make them into sashimi?

A: I think some people who drink sake ate them that way.

Q: Did you drink or smoke?

A: I smoked but I quit it.



Q: How much did you get paid?

A: 19 dollars a month.

Q: What did you do, Mrs. Akiyama?

A: I worked as a dishwasher in the kitchen.

Q: Were there many carps in the pond?

A: I think there were many.

Q: Did you go fishing?

A: Yes, I did but I was not too good at fishing.

Q: What kind of fish could you catch?

A: Mostly bass.

Q: Bass is good to eat, isn't it?

A: Yes, it is. I don't know whether the bass fight with each other but we can find only one or two bass at one place, so we cannot catch many of them.

Q: What kind of hobby did you have?

A: I made bonsai and also collected stones.

Q: Did you go out of camp to get trees to make bonsai?

A: I didn't make bonsai in the camp. I picked ironwood and made shogi (chess) and chess board.

Q: Did you bring it back?

A: Yes, I did. I will show it to you.



Q: What is your hobby, Mrs. Akiyama?

A: My aunt taught flower arrangement so I learned it for about a year from her. I wanted to learn it after I came here but I did not have an opportunity to learn it as I lived in the country. Now I am enjoying growing violets. My husband likes to take care of plants. We are leading a life of leisure now, but we used to work from morning till night 7 days a week. I taught Sunday School when Rev. Nakamura was the pastor. In those days I attended the church every Sunday, but after our business kept us busy I could not attend the church.

Q: Is ironwood scattered in the wood or are they buried in the ground?

A: They are growing in the mountains.

Q: Do you cut the raw tree?

A: Yes, and we split it in half by a saw.

Q: It will ruin the saw, won't it?

A: Yes, it does. We won't do such thing unless we had time to spare.

Q: What is this wood used for?

A: I don't think it has <sup>any</sup> ~~no~~ use as lumber because it becomes hollow inside. We didn't have anything else to do so we made this kind of thing. Some people made containers to put birds or goldfish in.

Q: Japanese are clever with their hands, aren't we?

A: Yes, we are. We had exhibitions once in a while. We were surprised such beautiful things were made. I think Americans were surprised.



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When we first entered the camp the ground was so soft that it was like walking on ashes. After a year the plants were getting bigger and there were beautiful garden everywhere. People made their own furnitures. We made only a table and a bench but some people made chest of drwers. I think they took them home with them. It was a good vacation. After we came home we worked hard. I became healthy after I had the rest.

Q: Were you in poor health before?

*M.A.A.* A: He had a gastric ulcer and was on diet so he had a hard time as he could not eat food from the mess hall. As we could not take food with us, young people were hungry when we first entered the camp. I asked the American who was taking care of our business to send us some canned goods, crackers and sugar. I made coffee and served the people who gathered around like ants on sugar. After a while we could order things from Sears and the canteen was opened so people were not hungry any more. We bought stoves and cooked some food at home. Even if we were put in camps we were more fortunate than people in Japan. I hear that people who went back to Japan by exchange ship had a hard time.

Q: After you came home did you start you business all over?

A: We had some things left, so we put them in order and started all over again. At first just two of us started but by and by the employees came back.

Q: Were the ponds made of cement?

A: Some of them were made of cement but most of them were not. They just had the tile around it.



Q: Were some of them broken when you came back?

A: Weeds were growing through the wire nettings, so we had to pull the weeds and do it all over again. Cattle were put in the pasture. Some goldfish were left, but it was just like starting all over again. After we invested the money in the business and were going to start it when the war broke out so we were pennyless.

Q: How long did it take to put the business back in shape?

A: It took about 2 years. Gradually the former employees came back and also John came back and managed the store, but it was not good.

Q: Why was it not good?

A: I think I invested too much.

Q: Did you have to start all over again?

A: No, we quit the business and sold the farm where Sears, Roebuck is standing now. We moved here in 1934 and evacuated in 1941.

We had invested all the money and had just started the business when the war broke out. and we had to evacuate. It was May and the ponds were filled with baby goldfish. We thought children did not have to evacuate but just us, so we worked hard to raise goldfish.

Q: Too bad, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was. We would have been a millionaire if there had been no war. We could have built a church. The church had been poor all the time. Before the war the wages were generally cheap, but the pastor's salary was especially cheap because people could not pay. At one time 5 or 6 of us from the church went to collect donations. A man who was picking carrots said, "If I sell a crate of carrots I can buy only a loaf of bread and I have 5 children." We felt sorry for him.



The donation was for 5 or 10 dollars, and we went around collecting only about once a year but still people could not pay. As it was such a time, it was hard to maintain a church.

Q: You told me that there were many Japanese when celery was produced. Did Japanese go away?

A: Gradually the celery growing work diminished so they moved away.

Q: When was that?

A: Around 1914 there was hardly any celery left. Almost all the single Japanese were gone and only those who had homes here stayed behind.

Q: Did it become difficult to maintain the church?

A: It was difficult from the beginning.

Q: Did the number of people who attend the church decreased?

A: In Rev. Terasawa's days many students came to church. They did not have homes and on Sundays they did not have any place to go, and to go to Los Angeles they had to take a trolley, so they went to church on bicycles. During the summer students came from Los Angeles to earn some spending money. They stayed in camps as they only had to pay for food. In winter they were gone. They were educated people so they had fun in the camp. At night they sang school songs and national anthems. I remember the leader was a student named Inagaki. In those days there were many students in Los Angeles who were working their way through college living in the white families and working as school boys. They went in the country during the summer to earn spending money.



Q: Were you in your 50s when you came back here?

A: Yes, I was almost 60 years old then. When I went to camp I was 54 so I felt like an old man <sup>and</sup> ~~so~~ I did not think I could get back up again.

Q: Did you and your wife started all over again after you came back?

A: Yes, we did as our son was in the service, but people who came back from the camp and did not have jobs helped us. Mexicans who used to work for us before gradually came back. Anyway, I think everything went well for us.

Q: When did you retire?

A: When we sold the farm about 4 years ago.

Q: Are you glad you came to America?

A: Yes, I am.

Q: What about you, Mrs. Akiyama?

A: I want to go to Japan for a visit but I don't want to go back to Japan. I belong here..

Q: When did you decide to live here permanently?

A: After I acquired American citizenship.

Q: What kind of thing do you want to teach young Sanseis?

A: I want to teach them that if a person work steadily he will find happiness.



Q: Do you think it is important for young people to be aware of being a Japanese?

A: I want them to be aware of being a Japanese.

Q: Do you think a person should experience hardships?

A: There are hardships in this life, but if you work honestly and with faith you will be trusted by others.

Q: Looking back, when was the hardest time for you?

A: The hardest thing was that I lost my son and my daughter-in-law rather than financial difficulties.

Q: When did you work the hardest?

That was

A: When I started the business before the war.

We worked hard from early in the morning. At night we stayed up till around midnight. One cooked the food for fish, and the other made fishing net.

Q: About what time did you get up?

A: We got up around 5 o'clock. In those days we had hopes so we enjoyed working even though we had to work hard.

Q: How did you make the fish food?

A: We cook flour and add ground shrimp powder in it. We made it taste good to us. We didn't learn how to make it. We made it ourselves. I think we could do that because we were in good health. My husband never became ill and worked hard.



Q: I heard that you recieved a decoration from Japan. When was that?

A: I think it was 5 or 6 years ago.

Q: About how much fish food did you feed the fish?

A: By the end we built a large stove outside and cooked  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 sacks of barley with salted sardine. At first I used to cook fish food in about 3 gallon pot several times. It took about 45 minutes to cook one pot, and I had to keep on stirring or it would burn. I cooked it after I put children to bed every night.

Q: Did the fish eat them well?

A: Yes, they did. Before they laid eggs I mixed eggs in the fish food.

Q: When they lay eggs do you separate them?

A: Before they lay eggs we separate female fish from male fish and put them in separate ponds. At breeding time we put them together.

Q: Could you tell the male goldfish from the female goldfish right away?

A: Yes, I can. When they are little we cannot, but after about two a years we can.

Q: Did you have about half male and half female goldfish?

A: There were more male goldfish.

Q: About how many times do they lay eggs?

A: About 3 times. We take the eggs and put them in the pond.



Q: On what do they lay eggs?

A: At first we planted water plant, but if there is too much grass it is no good, so we planted water hyacinth and let them lay eggs on its roots.

While I was in the camp I thought it would be fun if we still have the fish ponds, but we lost almost everything during the war.

Q: Was the breed of fish improved?

A: Yes, better breed of fish were hatched. Every year we pick good breed of fish and save them as parents for the next group. The good kind of goldfish are weak and slow in movement.